

## National Systems

FOSTER MOHRHARDT

"THE LIBRARY HAS followed the Federal Government as its functions have expanded into widely distributed field services. Although by no means so extensive as the library system in Washington, these libraries in the field are of special importance because of certain questions of policy that arise in their administration."<sup>1</sup> This was Carleton B. Joeckel's recognition some fifteen years ago that a new type of library system of "special importance" was developing. Actually, he was viewing these field activities at a point midway in their evolution, since they had had their beginnings about fifteen years earlier at the close of World War I. Whenever an agency has operated on a geographical basis or through scattered offices, there has been a tendency to create library services on a nationwide scale.

Some of these field libraries have been developed into what are here designated as "federal library systems," that is, library organizations with numerous professionally supervised branches in diverse geographical areas, controlled by a central office. The federal agencies having such systems are: Department of Agriculture, Department of the Air Force Special Services, Department of the Army Special Services, Department of the Navy Special Services, Veterans Administration Special Services, and Department of State Division of Libraries and Institutes. The State Department libraries are covered elsewhere in the present issue of *Library Trends*, and will not be treated in this paper.

Some of the basic facts necessary for comprehension of the systems in question are summarized in the Joeckel study of federal libraries. This states: "With two important exceptions the libraries of the Federal Government are not independent agencies but are organic parts of the governmental units they serve. They are not branches of a unified national library system but are subordinate units in departments,

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## *National Systems*

bureaus, or independent offices. The Federal libraries are controlled and administered by the agencies they serve. . . . In other words, the services rendered by most of the Federal libraries are not regarded as ends in themselves but as auxiliary to the general objectives and functions of the various governmental agencies. It follows that library organization in the Federal Government is complex and loosely knit in precisely the same degree as the structure of the Federal Government itself.”<sup>2</sup>

This recognition of federal libraries as “organic” units, “auxiliary” to the objectives of the agencies, is necessary for an understanding of their constantly changing organizational patterns. Most of the alterations result from necessity to conform with basic agency changes. These may reflect new objectives, or they may be merely structural realignments. Consequently, the accuracy of identification of trends in the library systems depends upon the observer’s familiarity with the agencies and also upon his general knowledge of federal libraries. In order to assist both the reader and the author in reaching a perspective, this paper has been organized into two main parts. The first presents a synoptic view of the library systems. The second identifies and evaluates general and specific tendencies.

Separate libraries have existed from the early days of organization in most of the agencies. Library systems, centrally controlled, however, are developments of the past thirty-five years. Most intensive has been the growth during the past fifteen years. This fact, plus a neglect of the field by library authors, necessitates the accumulation of data from personal rather than printed sources. Whenever possible, the facts have been checked for accuracy with departmental records. Discussion of the agency libraries below is limited to the “library systems” in these agencies, and in time to the years during which a centralized system grew up and reached its present form. No attempt is made to present a complete picture, nor the details of service. Reference is made at the beginning of each section, however, to sources of additional information on the libraries covered.

*Department of Agriculture Library.*<sup>3</sup> Motivation for the development of a library system was given in a memorandum of the Secretary of Agriculture dated November 6, 1940, which directed “the librarian to knit together the far-flung library facilities of the Department into a single strong library system.”<sup>4, 5</sup> This memorandum indicated that the Department librarian would be responsible for (1) general supervision and field coordination, (2) organization of the bureau libraries

as part of the Department library, (3) review of all applications for library positions in Washington and the field, (4) review of all books and periodical orders, (5) conducting of periodic examinations and evaluations of all library services in the Department of Agriculture. It was recognition by the Secretary that proper library service was not provided to the bulk of Agriculture employees, since three-fourths of the total employees were located outside Washington. As reported at the time, immediate steps were taken to set up a field system, viz., "The plan agreed upon is one of dynamic flow of material rather than the static method of multiplying inadequate bureau libraries in the field."<sup>6</sup> In June 1941, the library was organized on the following divisional lines: Division of Technical Processes, Division of Bibliography, Division of Reading and Reference Services, and Division of Field Library Services.

Three types of field libraries were then developed. Branches of the Department library served the departmental personnel in a region. Sub-branches took care of all departmental staff in one location. Stations served the staff of one bureau on a part-time basis, without a full-time trained librarian. The first branch was opened in 1941, and at the peak in 1945 there were 9 branches, 14 sub-branches, and 11 stations. As of 1953 field libraries are only classified as branches or stations, with 13 branches and 12 stations. Extensive studies have been made to determine the practicability of providing such field service under contractual arrangements with state agricultural colleges. It is now indicated that it is less costly per unit of service for the Department to provide it contractually rather than through its own branch libraries, but that service of somewhat lower grade results.

The impact of World War II showed that the library organization was sound and able to meet the variety and volume of demands it had to meet. The ensuing sentence from an annual report pointed out, however, that the union of the Department's libraries was accelerated by the war: "In order to meet the greatly increased demands, all libraries of the Department were consolidated in the Department library under Executive Order No. 9069 and Secretary's Memoranda 973 and 973 Supplement 1."<sup>7</sup> Regulations for all Agriculture libraries are now summarized in U.S. Department of Agriculture Administrative Regulations, Title 2—Library, August 1, 1952.

Twelve years have produced a strong, centrally managed system, consisting of a main library collection supplemented by 25 field libraries serving every segment of the Agriculture Department in all

### National Systems

parts of the country. This is the most closely knit and centrally administered of all federal library systems. The main office is responsible for establishing policy, general standards of performance, procedures, allocation of funds, selection of staff, coordination of reference and bibliographic effort, procurement of reading materials, and supervision. The organizational pattern is shown in Figure 1.

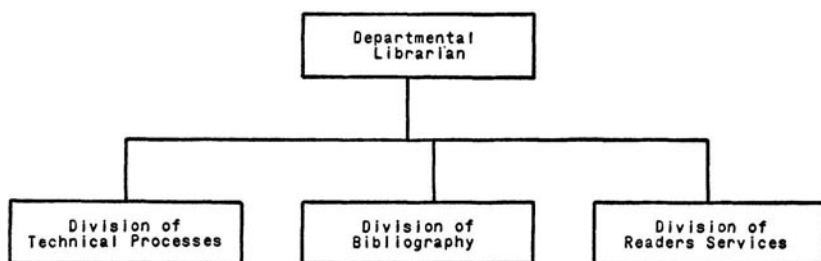


FIGURE 1

This library differs from all the other systems in that it concentrates on furthering research and education in the Department, and has no responsibility for leisure or recreational reading. Field services are included organizationally under the Division of Readers Services.

*Department of the Air Force Special Services Library Service.*<sup>8, 9</sup> Library service to Air Force as well as Army personnel was provided under the general supervision of the Army Library Service up to 1944, when separate provisions for the Air Force were set up. Within the Air Force structure the function of the central library office is primarily a staff activity, with few operating responsibilities. Figure 2 shows the scheme in effect.

Three general aspects are authorized as follows: (1) a general service for all members of the Air Force, providing a reading program

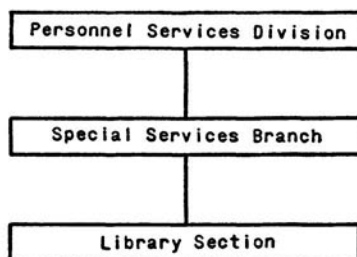


FIGURE 2

which assures a balanced collection of books in all fields and affords an opportunity for the creative use of leisure time; (2) technical and educational activity, providing publications in the fields of aeronautics and related subjects, military science and tactics, research and development, and other subjects related to the mission of the Air Force; (3) legal aid, i.e., supplying law books and publications needed in legal activities.

The headquarters library office of the U.S. Air Force provides policy direction and broad staff supervision for all three phases of library service. However, the actual supervision of libraries within a Command is the responsibility of the Major Air Commander. The USAF is composed of Commands which are responsible for assigned duties, such as training, research and development, materiel, and education. These often overlap each other geographically, although not functionally. Several libraries may be located in one area, yet may be serving different functional commands. General library policies apply to all, but operational responsibilities and determination of the extent of service remain within the control of the Command.

Although the paper organization<sup>10</sup> represents a complete operating unit, the innate nature of decentralized authority in the military leaves primarily policy-forming, staff-supervising, and budget-reviewing activities to the Air Force centralized library agency, as contrasted with those of line-authority organization. Central responsibilities currently discharged are: (1) providing policy for all Air Force libraries; (2) procuring basic book collections for new stations; (3) selecting and purchasing monthly book kits, paperbound kits, and magazine kits for distribution to base libraries; (4) monitoring the technical book supply program; (5) establishing personnel standards and participating in recruitment and placement; and (6) supervising staff.

The central office provides more operating assistance to the general than to the technical libraries. The latter, because of their specialized and individualized requirements, determine locally their operational needs and procedures. The general libraries reach every element of the Air Force. Libraries are found in all parts of the world at the levels of airstrip, base, camp, depot, field, hospital, squadron, and unit.

Here, as in the Army, recognition of the need for library service is shown by the top command. However, due to the military type of organization, centralized control is acceptable only when it simplifies station activities and when it does not conflict with the prerogatives

### *National Systems*

of the base commander. Although general policies can be established, kits of books selected and distributed, basic collections furnished, and recruitment assistance provided, a completely integrated system cannot be operated unless there is strong central responsibility and control.

*Department of the Army Special Services Library Service.*<sup>11</sup> The American Library Association and numerous volunteer groups cooperated to provide a nucleus for the development of an Army Library Service during World War I, and to give an impetus to it. During and following the war some centralized library activities were carried out and lasted until about 1924, when the director resigned and the Army "generally let the library service fall into disuse. For the most part, it became merely a gesture."<sup>12</sup>

Preparations for World War II, an expanding Army, and the reorganization of the Armed Forces stimulated the revitalization of the Army Library Service. It should be recognized, however, that Army organization, with its decentralization of authority and responsibility to field level, does not permit the growth of strong single control. Jamieson indicates this clearly in his book on the development of the Army Library Service, as follows:

The army command system, geared for combat, in which it is necessary for field commanders to make spot decisions, does not grant such authority to the War Department chief of a minor activity. Authority is decentralized to the commander in the field. The War Department ordinarily gives him only the most general instructions. It tells him what he is there for, but not how to do it. At most it requires him to assign specialists to his staff who have certain kinds of technical knowledge which may be helpful to him. Thus, the service command librarians and the theater library officers worked for their own chiefs, the service command and theater Special Services officers, and not for the chief of the War Department Library Section. It should be clear, then, that during the war the Army Library Service did not have a single controlling head with authority to establish policies and to direct that they be carried out. It was contrary to army policy to have a chief army librarian. There was only a War Department representative of the Army Library Service."<sup>13</sup>

It was probably Jamieson's intent in the last sentences to indicate that the Army did not have an individual with authority comparable to that of a university librarian or the director of a municipal library system. The Chief of the Library Section of the Army did have policy-

making power, but he could not direct that the policies be carried out. To the nongovernmental librarian, this might well present a very discouraging picture. However, within this limiting framework, it was possible for an ingenious staff to provide centralized guidance and service from a central office.

Centralized library activities which were initiated in 1940 and which have been continued are: (1) recommendations for post libraries to commanding generals; (2) allotment of funds for personnel and reading materials; (3) preparation of manuals for procurement, property-management, procedures, and records; (4) establishment of basic collections; and (5) guidance in library design. Few changes have been made in the library organizational pattern since 1940.<sup>14-16</sup> Recently it has been separated from Recreation Service, which should add emphasis to library activities. In the past, those with ultimate responsibility for libraries have been men with training in fields other than librarianship.

The Army Special Services library program is supported from two sources: (1) appropriated funds made available by the Congress; (2) nonappropriated funds made available from the profits of post exchanges, movies, and the like. Because of differences in the derivation of money for the procurement of books, complete centralized purchasing is not possible. Books bought from nonappropriated funds are ordered locally from sources determined by the local nonappropriated fund custodian or treasurer.

*Department of the Navy Bureau of Naval Personnel Library Services.*<sup>17</sup> Although library provisions for men ashore and afloat have been made since the early days of the Navy, a centrally administered service has existed only since World War I. The central office controls over 1,600 shipboard and station units, staffed by more than 100 professional civilian librarians. Navy Regulation 0441 places this vast system under the Bureau of Naval Personnel Technical Control, giving it responsibility for "library service for the Navy and Marine Corps, exclusive of the technical and professional requirements for other bureaus and offices."<sup>18</sup>

The mission of the Library Services Branch is to develop and administer a program of library service for the Navy afloat and ashore, including the Marine Corps. The libraries provide for the general informational needs of each ship and station, supporting the education and training and supplying books for leisure-time reading. Functions of the central office include:



### *National Systems*

(1) Formulation and implementation of plans, policies, and standards.

(2) Budgeting. Recommendations and justification of book funds for the library program. (For some activities, appropriated funds are supplemented by local nonappropriated funds.)

(3) Administration. Establishing practices and procedures for field libraries. Professional guidance to librarians and responsible officials in field activities, through correspondence and visits by bureau and district librarians.

(4) Book reviewing, selection, and distribution. Selection, procurement, and distribution of current publications and books of particular interest to naval personnel. (Actual purchase is by Navy purchasing offices.) Maintaining and controlling library book stocks at Naval Supply Centers at Norfolk and Oakland.

(5) Upkeep of basic library collections for ships and stations. Selecting and issuing and commissioning libraries for each ship and station, and keeping these collections up to date by replacements.

(6) Direction of personnel. Analysis of the need of the shore establishments for professional civilian librarians, and recommendations as to the qualifications for such personnel, and the number required. Professional guidance and assistance in selection and appointment of librarians to field activities, promotions, transfers, etc.

(7) Maintenance of auxiliary collections. Five libraries contain specialized books which are not duplicated in the many small ship and station collections, and do largely a mail-order business.

(8) Provision of district librarians. These act as field liaison representatives at nine commands.

This centralized Navy library service is exclusive of the requirements of bureaus and offices of the Navy Department, and such libraries as are otherwise appropriated for, i.e., the Naval Academy Library at Annapolis and the Naval War College Library at Newport, Rhode Island. Naval technical and research libraries are thus not under centralized appropriations or control. Recently the technical libraries in the Washington area, however, have been placed under the general supervision of a "Coordinator of Navy Libraries."

In summary, it may be stated that centralized control is exercised only over the numerous general libraries. It is specified as (1) management—budget, etc., and (2) technical—professional guidance, standards, supervision, and centralized book selection.



## FOSTER MOHRHARDT

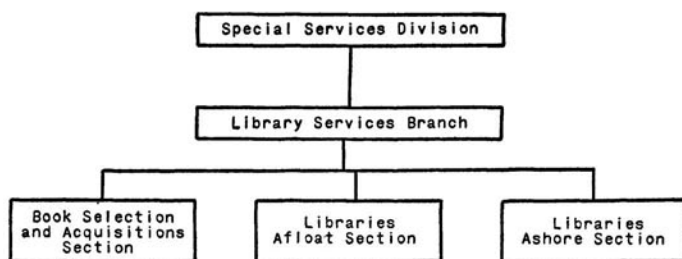


FIGURE 3

The general pattern of organization is shown in Figure 3.

*Veterans Administration Special Services Library Service.*<sup>19-21</sup> Coincident with the organization of the Veterans Administration as the Veterans Bureau in 1922, was the establishment of a strong centralized office for the control of all field libraries. Libraries had been an integral part of the soldiers' homes since their establishment in 1868, and libraries had been started in 1918 by the American Library Association in those war hospitals that later became part of the Veterans Administration. From 1922 until 1945, the influence of the central office was mainly felt through printed regulations, personnel management, and allocation of funds. General policies were established, budgets prepared, librarians assigned to positions throughout the country, and reviews prepared for field use. Thus it is evident that more than a nucleus of a centralized library system was in operation. Building on this base, greater centralization of library activities was inaugurated in 1946 with the expansion and reorganization of the Veterans Administration. All field library activities were studied to determine the repetitive operations that might be more efficiently conducted at a central location. Book reviewing, book ordering, classification, and cataloging were transferred to Central Office, in order to free field librarians from these duties and enable them to increase their service to patients and staff.

Centralized responsibilities of the Veterans Administration library service are: (1) policy and plans, (2) procedures, (3) book and periodical contracting and procurement, (4) screening of new books and issuance of a book-review publication, (5) classification and cataloging, (6) a reference center to answer difficult and involved questions, (7) a bibliographic clearinghouse to prevent duplication of field effort, and (8) supervision of field operations.

## *National Systems*

Although such activities were greatly strengthened in the new organization, two elements were decentralized. Quite properly, the duty of selecting materials for the local collections was delegated to the local librarians, with Central Office acting as an order center. It was also determined to place the responsibility for personnel placement at the local level. In filling field library vacancies, it is not necessary for the hospital to consult with Library Service, Central Office, on either the availability or suitability of candidates.

*Other government field libraries.* Various other agencies have field libraries which are connected in some way with a central Washington office library. The Bureau of Prisons of the Department of Justice maintains libraries, some under professional supervision, in federal prisons throughout the United States. These compose a system, with several services and controls from a central point.

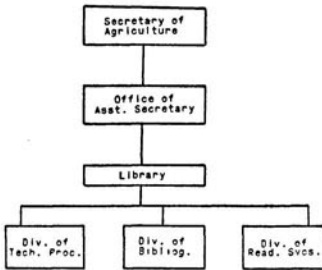
Field libraries are also kept up by various judicial units of the federal government. For instance, the Tax Court of the United States and the various district and circuit courts are maintaining such agencies. Likewise, there are hospital and medical libraries in Public Health Service hospitals throughout the country. These, like the judicial libraries, are decentralized, and lack the strong unified control found in a system.

Figure 4 and Tables 1-3 describe further the systems and services treated above. They aim to bring out the pattern or patterns of uniformity in the several systems. Figure 4, "Organizational Placement of Library Systems," provides a picture of the placement of library service within each agency. Table 1, "Summary Comparison of Centralized Activities," breaks down the important elements in centralized operations, showing the extent of centralization in each case. Table 2, "Statistical Summary," gives an estimate of the large segment of the total library picture that these five systems occupy. Table 3, "Extent and Limitations of Centralized Library Service in Agencies," shows the elements within the agency which come within the purview of the library system, and also the types of library service that operate independently of the system.

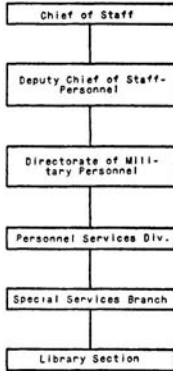
Attempting to summarize trends in federal library systems is somewhat like trying to identify the passengers in a fast moving train as it passes. Compared to university or public libraries, their pattern of alteration is kaleidoscopic. During the three months immediately preceding the completion of this article, changes in some degree have been made or considered in most of the libraries here described. Two sys-

# FOSTER MOHRHARDT

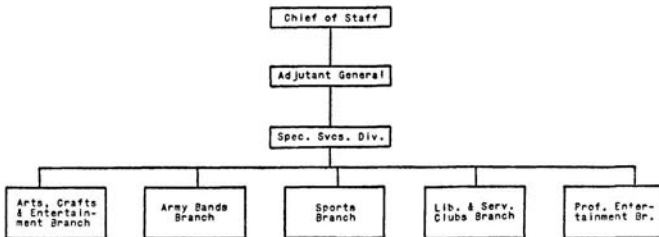
## I. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



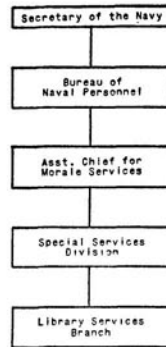
## II. DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE



## III. DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY



## IV. DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY



## V. VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

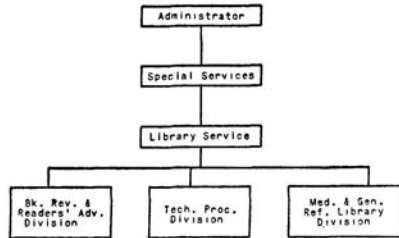


FIGURE 4

*Organizational Placement of Library Systems*

# National Systems

TABLE 1  
*Summary Comparison of Centralized Activities \**

Activities	Agricul- ture	Air Force	Army	Navy	Vet. Admin.
Plans and policies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Budget and allotments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Technical processes					
Book review					
Reviews prepared for field	—	✓	—	✓	✓
Primary selection made for field	—	✓	✓	✓	—
Procurement					
Contracting authority	✓	—	—	—	✓
Ordering activities	✓	—	Some	✓	✓
Distribution of materials	✓	✓	—	✓	—
Basic collections provided	—	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classification and cataloging					
Centralized classification	✓	—	—	Some	✓
Centralized cataloging	✓	—	—	—	✓
Readers Services					
Extensive reference assistance	✓	—	—	Some	✓
Coordinated bibliographical pro- gram	✓	—	—	—	✓
Personnel					
Standards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Active recruitment	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Evaluation of applicants	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Actual appointment	✓	—	—	—	—
Supervision					
Performance standards	✓	✓	—	✓	✓
Regional supervisors	✓	✓	✓	✓	—
Field inspections	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\* Activities checked are those centralized in each case.

## FOSTER MOHRHARDT

TABLE 2

*Statistical Summary, Fiscal Year, 1952 \**

	Agriculture	Air Force	Army	Navy	Veterans Adminis.
Annual circulation	1,350,164	5,000,000	7,806,960	—†	13,315,470†
Total volumes	1,200,000	2,262,000	2,707,791	—†	1,537,565
Number of libraries					
Regular libraries	26	211	532	—†	225
Small or deposit collections	—	3,168	647	—†	320
Total library units	26	3,379	1,179	1,600	545
Total number of professional personnel	62		384	100	436

\* These are approximate figures and do not represent official agency data.

† Information not available.

‡ Includes recorded circulations of books and magazines.

TABLE 3

*Extent and Limitations of Centralized Library Service in Agencies*

Government Agency	Direct Service	Independent Operation
Agriculture	All elements	
Air Force	Active field units	
Army	Active field units	Medical Technical U.S. Military Academy Service Schools Administrative Libraries
Navy	Fleet ashore and afloat	U.S. Naval Academy U.S. Naval War College Technical Medical Research Bureaus Legal libraries
Veterans Administration	Patients Medical and other staffs	

tems have shifted their position within the agency organization. One anticipates a major move. One has adjusted to minor changes in agency-wide policy. Not one of the revisions is made in the interest of improved library service. All stem from the constant need to conform to agency arrangements. They are not political, nor do they spring from political impetus, but result from the continuous process of adaptation in government operations. It is therefore essential that

## *National Systems*

a library system of this type, if it is to maintain a measure of permanency, be organized on a flexible basis. Policies must be general enough to cover all possible alterations; procedures must be rigid only to a limited degree; centralized operations must be restricted to areas in which they are essential and will be least affected by agency changes.

The general planning in the beginning for each of the systems has contemplated an integrated, closely controlled operating unit. Usually, however, as the proposals clear through the many offices that must give concurrence, there is a repeated weakening of even the structural pattern. Then as the scheme is gradually put into effect, distance from a central control and the prerogative of field authority begin modifying the paper outline. The actual operating library system emerges from the process as an unrecognizable child of the parent. This, however, is not to imply a criticism of the end product, since often it emerges stronger and more practical because of the vigorous evolutionary period. Fortunately, the policy-making function is least apt to be questioned or changed. A trend is evident toward strong, centrally controlled responsibility for policy.

There is a discernible tendency to provide unified library service to all elements of the organization only in those agencies which have vigorous central controls. Where there is a good measure of decentralized authority, with field responsibilities organized on functional as well as geographical lines, there generally is a multiplicity of library services. In such units determination of activities for a specific library service may depend upon local decisions.

Most agencies recognize the chance of overlapping in responsibility, and have established definite nationwide areas of authority for library systems. These determinations are issued as official agency regulations, and establish clear functions of the library service at all levels. The rulings are brief and very general in nature. They locate the library service organizationally, establish the mission, indicate the responsible library official, and give some indication of the operating procedures. To aid in implementation the library ordinarily publishes a manual or technical bulletin expanding the general regulations and describing the pattern of operation expected. Wherever possible, allowance is made for local determination concerning the best methods to be used. These regulations and manuals are specific and detailed only in those sections governed by agency- or government-wide regulations. Whenever possible, they encourage local initiative and responsibility. As an example, information concerning book circulation and charging

methods is very general, and the local librarian can determine the particular method that best meets the station's needs.

The central office of a library system reserves greatest authority for itself in the field of policy determination. The trend is to have policy control over as wide a range of activities as possible. Good management is evidenced thus, since it prevents overlapping, codifies existing regulations, consolidates similar services, and provides a clear definition concerning the activities that can be most economically centralized in one office and those that can be handled more effectively in the field. Central office organizations are small in operating staff and simplified in form. The pattern varies from a system with the central field control embodied in one professional librarian and no structural divisions, to one with fifteen professional librarians and three divisions under a director. During the past five years, the systems have moved toward small, compactly organized units.

Noticeable is the leadership shown by the libraries in using mechanical aids to replace or supplement traditional methods and to provide the most effective service at the least cost. The Department of Agriculture system, where Ralph R. Shaw has developed two unique machines embracing photographic processes, is outstanding.<sup>22</sup> The Rapid Selector and the Photo-Clerk represent explorations of mechanized solutions to library problems. Machines have also been adapted to book purchasing and cataloging in the Veterans Administration, so that clerical work there has been reduced to a minimum.<sup>23</sup>

Quality and quantity controls are generally used, with increasing interest shown in performance standards. It has been necessary for the systems to establish their own norms, since such library criteria as have been developed generally are suited mainly to college or public libraries. Although attempts have been made to fit such standards to government use, the adaptations are at best mere approximations of the original norms. Hence, government systems have individually made studies and worked out specialized standards.

Formulas, developed from field data, are used to prepare budget submissions. They generally deal with the numbers and types of patrons to be served, and also recognize the varieties and complexities of services performed. The financial request is sent by the library service through the responsible bureau to the agency budget officers. An agency budget is then prepared and submitted to the Bureau of the Budget, and later altered to conform to the Bureau's recommendations. Congress, after presentations by the Bureau of the Budget and



### *National Systems*

the agency, authorizes an appropriation item for the agency, and the library system is notified as to funds available for the fiscal year. On the basis of these, a final budget is prepared. Allotments are made quarterly to field stations, based upon numbers and types of personnel served, upon the variety and extent of programs, and finally upon the special needs of stations. These allotments are usually paper transfers of funds.

Most difficult of all the problems in government library systems is the constant adjustment of operations to fit staff allowances. In most nongovernmental libraries, the number of library personnel available for a year or longer is established on the basis of demonstrated need and remains stable on an annual basis. Since federal library systems are generally small segments of larger bureaus or divisions, the size of the central office and field library staffs tends to be determined first by the number of people available to the agency, second by the number granted the bureau or division, and finally by the strength of the justification prepared by the library service. Many of the systems have tried to stabilize staffs through the development of standard staffing patterns and guides. Although the attempt has been to make these guides realistic, they have had little or no effect either upon the actual staff allowed or upon its stability.

Even after annual staff allotments have been made, budget and personnel cuts can be and are put into effect. The resulting uncertainty has forced the systems to plan programs upon the basis of minimum services, or of graded services, with adoption of priorities and understandings as to possible eliminations. The trend is to develop strong standards for library personnel, and to intensify recruiting; the latter in an effort both to maintain high quality and to fill vacancies as rapidly as possible, since the first result of cuts in personnel usually is to do away with unfilled positions.

In order to safeguard government property, detailed systems have been developed to provide records showing source, quantity, and location of materials. Such registers apply to things classified as "non-expendable." Since books have been placed in this category, the cost of recording accountability has approximated the actual cost of the books. Generally no differentiation is made between responsibility for books and that for any other item. It involves a complex system of record keeping in compliance with regulations. The accounts are subject to regular audit within the agency, and librarians necessarily divert some of their time from service to the maintenance of records.<sup>16, 24</sup>

Recognizing the loss of valuable professional effort, and also the fact that the resale value of books could never compensate for the accounting expense, there is a definite trend on the part of library administrators to convince agencies of the negative and uneconomical nature of such records. During World War II the Army Library Service<sup>25</sup> began an attempt to relax accountability regulations, but so far they have not been altered. The first agency to declare books expendable was the Veterans Administration, which recognized in 1946 that it was an economy and an impetus to professional activity to place books in such a category, and subsequently accepted the library shelf list as an authoritative accountability record. This is an important advance in government library procedures. Many other agencies are active in their efforts to achieve such a solution.

Procedures on acquisitions vary. Some units use agency-wide purchasing offices, others the Federal Supply Service, and a few have purchasing responsibilities within the library organization. The assumption of contracting and purchasing by library authorities provides the most efficient service. Where buying is handled by a nonlibrary office, constant surveillance is required to insure that contracts run concurrently and that they fully represent the needs.

The systems have progressively simplified cataloging techniques. Classifications have been standardized and reduced to meet specific needs. Excessive bibliographic detail has little place in most of the catalogs, since they primarily serve as locating devices and not as research paraphernalia. Although the trend has been toward providing field stations with complete sets of catalog cards for books purchased centrally, in most of the systems this service covers only a minor part of the total book accessions. The field libraries are still left with a major portion of the cataloging responsibility.

Federal libraries having technical or scientific branches are exploring the possibilities of contracting with nongovernmental libraries for specialized reference and bibliographic services. Limitations on and reductions of library staffs, plus the increasing cost of printed materials, have impelled them to examine such outside sources of aid.

A further recent development is the use by federal library systems of advisory groups composed of library specialists. Generally, such groups assist in evaluating the programs and provide objective critical analysis. They also serve effectively as liaison agents between the agency officials and the world of librarianship.

The trend of library development in the government systems indi-

## *National Systems*

cates that attempts will be made to provide even greater centralization. Also indicated are further studies with a view to consolidating some or all of the systems into a single unit. It is very probable that such investigations will end, as they have in the past, with the conclusion that such a centralization of services is unattainable because of the organic integration of the various libraries within their services. Even the desirability of such centralization is to be questioned, since it inevitably encourages uniformity. Up to the present, standards and standardization have served as service aids. They have set up scales for such matters as book and magazine needs, staff sizes, and classification systems, and have enabled the library directors to explain their needs to nonlibrarians. Properly, however, book selection, methods of service, and management have been left in the hands of the field librarians, thus conducing to staff development and superior service.

Is there, then, any coordination possible in these five library systems, spending a total of \$10,000,000 per year, with an aggregate of more than 6,000,000 volumes, and circulating more than 30,000,000 items per year? There are, in fact, many fields to explore. One embraces voluntary cooperative efforts, of which many instances have appeared in the past few years. In addition, purchasing and cataloging indicate points at which service and savings should be studied. Finally, the possibility of a federal library committee needs further consideration. This committee would differ from the present advisory groups in that it would be an official government unit, with a permanent chairman and a small staff. It would be similar to the Armed Forces Medical Policy Council, and would serve primarily as a coordinating body, with which the various systems could discuss their plans and arrange for cooperative undertakings. It would have advisory but not operating responsibilities. It should study areas of responsibility, opportunities for cooperation, policy, procedures, and performance. It would assist the systems in carrying on the programs of effective library service so evident among them today.

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FOSTER MOHRHARDT

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